

## CHAPTER - 6

### FOR A CONCLUSION

To conclude, to say the last word, that is. As if the last word will be said. As if the last word can ever be said Conclusion · admitting the whole baggage of finality, closure Against the grain of surplus, of surplus meanings

That is the problem. To submit a thesis is to claim a newness. An originality An origin and a finality. All the trappings of essentialist metaphysics. But the thesis itself belonging to the broader project of subverting the idea of origin, finality and thesis which people all over the world will be writing at this time.

But still a conclusion in conformity with the formal demands of a thesis. To complete the propriety of thesis as property. To conclude, to enclose, to imbricate Entomb.

Tomb. The deafening silence of the Pyramid. Pyramid to designate the sign "The pyramid becomes the semaphor of the sign. The signifier of signification" (Derrida, J. 1982 B)

To conclude then with the sign. Interrogation of the concept of sign within classical semiology, reliving Derrida's interrogation through the discourse of economics Reliving spacing and temporizing through Asiatic Feudalism and nontransition.

Let us elaborate spacing and temporizing and then see its relevance in the context of Asiatic Feudalism and nontransition.

The concept of difference is the constitutive principle of 'sign' within classical semiology. See its conception of the process of the sign : past presence → sign

→ future presence. Concept of the sign involving both full presence and temporal mediation. Past presence, for example, is an image fully present in the mind of the sender. Future presence is an image that will be fully present in the mind of the receiver. Each presence is different from the other and also from the sign which transmits, is the process, the transition, from one full presence to another. To paraphrase Derrida (ibid), classical semiology sees signs as both *secondary* (originating from a lost presence) and *provisional* (projecting into or leading to an ultimate presence). Sign as the mediation in time, the detour, the transition from one structured presence to another. On to the homology. Structure → transition → structure : past presence → sign → future presence.

But difference, the constitutive principle of sign is itself constituted by difference. Past presence as fully structured, different from future presence, itself structured. This difference constitutes their meaning. But past and future presence themselves are constituted by the sign. So the spatial difference marked with alterity. Spacing. Again sign as the detour, but the detour already constituting the structure. Temporising.

"An interval must separate the present from what it is not in order from the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of itself, thereby also dividing everything that is thought on the basis of the present. In constituting itself, in dividing itself dynamically, this interval may be called *spacing*, the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space, temporizing' (Derrida, J 1982A, P13).

Back to economists' discourse. GR as homonym of sign. The pyramidal structure, that which encases, entombs, writes the conclusion into the thesis

Pyramid weaving life and death. Insinuating life in death, and death in life  
GR as symptom Showing up the lack in structure of space, spacing GR as  
constitutive principle of both Asiatic Feudalism and Globalisation. Hence, GR  
also showing up the lack in the structure of time of transition, producing what  
we provisionally designate as nontransition, temporizing. We question, there-  
fore, the concept of stagnancy and nontransition as used to denigrate Asiatic  
Feudalism

Let us schematically narrate the elements of the structure of *Asiatic Feuda-  
lism* as we find them in Hegel, Marx, Wittfogel (Hegel, 1952A, Marx 1965,  
Bailey and Llobera, 1981).

At the base of the Asian Feudal System is the self sufficient village community  
where jobs are divided on the basis of a socio-religious code, a dharma, that is.

Economically self sufficient character of village economy points to the formal  
character of the state State as mere formality. That is the community of  
producers at the level of the village needs the formal institution of monarchy as  
the expression of community identity. The body within the pyramid as arbi-  
trary. Thus the working people, the masses within the Asiatic Feudal system  
indifferent to changes at level of the monarch.

Following from the self-sufficient character of the village economy we also  
have the parasitic character of the towns as residence of royal entourage

So a way out of all the trouble that Adam and Eve face at the moment of  
surplus production — throw it away, give it to a distant ruler. So Adam and  
Eve can continue to inhabit a needs based qualitative equality ordered para-  
dise. That is a community based on the order of AL. That is the crux. *If surplus*

*is axiomatically, siphoned off, then needs based equality must rule Thus the stagnancy of Asiatic Feudalism. Nothing else is necessary to produce its characteristic lack of conflict But siphoned off on what basis ? On the basis of power over space. The monarch has power over the space of production Thus GR insinuating into, constituting, Asiatic Feudalism.*

Then where do we place the Chatterjee-Dumont conflict about one Dharma and many dharmas ? Without going into the question of the constitutive principle of Monarchy within Asiatic Feudalism, which can be one site for this controversy, as we discuss presently, one can locate the controversy as centering around the question of what constitutes proper 'needs'. The Orientalist position is that there is consensus — one dharma. The Subaltern position is that there is conflict — many dharmas. Chatterjee's (i.e. Subaltern Studies) point is well taken. You differentiate East from West by axiomatically enunciating that East is marked by absence of conflict (one dharma) and West by its presence (many dharmas) then you go on to prove the absence of dynamism in the East, where your position is that dynamism is generated by conflict

At the same time one must point out the inconsistency in Chatterjee's position. By positing an ideal dharma as a potential, he violates his own position about many contending dharmas. Dialectics cannot substitute the magician's wand wishing away conflicting perceptions of needs in an ideal society, at the end of history. The conflict will potentially exist even in the what we have tangentially referred to as "associated producers' economy" in ch 1. Thus the need for a never ending cultural dialogue (or revolution, if you will).

But the Orientalist- Subaltern (i.e. Dumont-Chatterjee) debate is more appropriately situated at the site of surplus appropriation within Asiatic Feudalism (or the Orient inhabited by **Homo Hierarchicus**).

The Orientalist position is that the village community within this system, as contrasted to the European village community, lacks dynamism. The 'stagnation' is identically analysed by Marx and Hegel — there is no dialectical conflict between selves. In fact, selflessness is the mark of belonging to this village community. Self identified with (identity not dialectical synthesis, unity) with community. Self defines itself, derives meaning, only from its community.

Surplus production is handed over to the monarch as the personification of community of communities. The embodiment of the higher community. The surplus producer handing over the surplus to its own concept, its constitutive principle. No conflict, therefore. The monarch also constituting all that is productive. Not just selves who derive their soul and will from their own principle, the monarch, but also natural resources, the space of work. Thus, in principle, monarch as the ultimate owner of all that is 'productive'. Ownership in Hegelian terms — one who puts his will and so activates what in the absence of the relation to this free will, would remain inert.

Absence of conflict, of class positions, explained by surplus producers handing over their surplus output to the monarch as the embodiment of their own constitutive principle. This violation of dialectical principle is just another expression of the Orientalist position that there is one dharma in the Orient. Position open to Chatterjee's criticism of Dumont.

But to be fair, Chatterjee escapes this dilemma in positing his ideal caste based community only by eliding the question of surplus production.

If we leave out the Orientalist prejudices then, Asiatic Feudalism is characterised by self sufficient communities of producers handing over their entire surplus production to an outsider position — monarch. Absent function-

ally from the productive system. Monarch's power based on his control over the space of production Thus, monarch's appropriation as GR.

Move on to *globalisation*. Globalisation as displacement of Asiatic Feudalism and Asiatic Feudalism as displacement of globalisation. Both constituted by GR

Let us start on a lighter vein. See sameness with jaundiced Orientalist eyes In the (post) modern times of capitalism in the era of globalisation, local hands over its surplus to global. Local referring to all localised positions, denied privilege of flitting hither and tither. Local noncommodity producers, local petty commodity producers, local capital. Global, in obvious contrast, the globe trotting positions. In ch. 5 we have narrated the details of the process through which mobile capital surreptitiously drains surplus from locally embedded petty commodity producers and noncommodity producers interacting with some position within fundamental capitalist class process. The details of the process of global capital draining local capital will be essentially the same.

The process of surplus appropriation works through a global market coupled with confinement of locals. Confinement is enforced through legal measures enshrined in international charters (like exclusion of free mobility of labour from purview of WTO), through restrictive trade practices, through nontariff barriers. But confinement for some positions complemented with mobility for other positions — the surplus appropriating positions. The confinement forgotten, suppressed, it is only the global market which is touted to generate the identity of new citizens of the world. Revel in market value as identity. Glory be to the global market ! Market as constituting the identity of new (wo)man

Surplus producers hand over surplus to the monarch who is the personification of the higher community. Of the constitutive principle of identity. See the

Orientalist vision of Asiatic Feudalism and its mirror vision of globalised capitalism are much the same

But that just goes to show that the caricatures are the same. Caricatures magnify some characteristics, suppress others. Suppression here of the displacements, condensations, compromises and coercion involved in the domination of the surplus producers by monarchy, in one instance, and market, in the other. Magnification here of the power of fetish (community and commodity) to the stature of simple hegemony or complex hegemony<sup>1</sup>.

Our vision of sameness is different. Monarch and global capital constitute outsider positions. That is, the surplus appropriator position as nonparticipatory in the process of production of surplus — what has been termed ‘subsumed class position’ (Resnick and Wolff, 1987, ch 3). Monarch and global capital extracting surplus on the strength of their power over the space of production. Thus GR constituting both the share of monarch, as well as that of global capital.

A detour, which is a circular path leading back to the origin, as always : recall the mention of primitive capital accumulation in ch. 5 as strategy of concealing GR as profit. In other words masking GR appropriated by capitalist class position as profit. Look at primitive capital accumulation in the era of globalisation. New international law relating to Intellectual Property Rights, new laws for Information Technology sector, Plant Breeder Rights, gene patenting, all coming in a rush to extend the commodity market into areas which were out of bounds. Essentially (!) primitive capital accumulation converting commons to private property. Expanding the scope of extracting GR masked as profit.

Back to the question of sameness of Asiatic Feudalism and capitalism in the age of globalisation : the surplus producers in both systems are indifferent to the specificity of surplus appropriator. The surplus appropriator in both system are absent from the fundamental class process As subsumed class they constitute a condition for reproduction of the system by propagating the myth of one dharma. Global capital propagates the myth of commodity equality, judgement by the market. Monarch propagates the myth of community (of communities) The one propagates commodity fetish, the other community fetish.

So Asiatic Feudalism as displacement of globalised capitalism and globalised capitalism as displacement of Asiatic Feudalism, and both constituted by GR Spacing rather than difference.

But becoming-space of time, is the same as becoming-time of space, temporizing. The one signifying the differencing of structures. The other signifying repetition as displacement of transition. So to nontransition.

Nontransition was the birthmark of Asiatic Feudalism. Deformity that set it aside from the flow of history. History as the narration of flow of time in the West, narration of transition between structures of Western modes of production over time.

But repetition, nontransition also marking capitalism in the era of globalisation. The enigmatic East, the inscrutable Buddha risen to mark timelessness, imprint the East as the sign of disarray in the arrangement of Western modes of production over time. Repetition as displacement of one myth by another Community fetish displaced into commodity fetish

But repetition also marking absence of fated course of history . Of history as fate Revaluing, therefore, critically, self criticality, revolutionary practice (Re)marking openness into theoretical closure in another way which is, of course, just the same. Repetition as same but not quite. Capitalism in the era

of globalisation as the same but not quite ( the same) as Asiatic Feudalism. Repetition implying, therefore, a degree of indeterminacy in structure. A point detailed (in another way) in ch 5.

So we come to the end of the story about surplus production and struggles between class positions which are unrecorded, which is also the story about surplus meanings, about appropriation of meanings by some global intellectual positions. The unrecorded working class has its counterpart in the unrecognised intelligentsia of the postcolony — colony in the era of globalisation, which is all over the globe. The localised intelligentsia, that is.

The metonym of the worker is denied the privileges of the recognised worker. The local intelligentsia is denied the privileges of global and comprador intelligentsia — invitations to institutionalised discussions, the right to question at such gatherings, and so on.

But local has the option of impropriety. As long as it hands over surplus, global is not concerned whether they maintain proper(ty) etiquette. The work process of petty producers and ecosystem people escape the discipline of the factory. The discourse of local, noncomprador intelligentsia is not bound by the conventions of institutional discourse. It is improper, uncivilised. It breaks the code of civil society. The rule of private property is not a condition for its existence. This is common to all community production trading at the margin with capital.

The surplus produced by the community is unrecorded. Recorded only and ever as property of capital. The voice of local intelligentsia crossing the boundary of community discourse is not recorded, is censored from academic journals, but is metamorphosed into the academic publications of the duly constituted spokespersons, generating surplus for them who flit across the globe with their third worldly studies.

This outsider intelligentsia which writes pamphlets, organises local peoples' movements, addresses street corner gatherings, talks endlessly, with no end in

view, writes poetry in the nether world of little magazines, is not bothered about who spoke what, first. The rules of property, of authorship are not constitutive principles of its discourse.

Many of the ideas incorporated in this dissertation have emanated from this milieu. In fact, the work process which has generated this dissertation is substantially part of this community academic process

Thus while authorial presence is the constitutive principle of this dissertation, as of all dissertations, the very originality of the dissertation is located at the site which questions the possibility of authorship.

So we close provisionally, for the time being a thesis which is also about the impossibility of thesis.

#### NOTE :

*Simple hegemony* is defined over a Hegelian (essentialist) space captured by the universal particulars scheme. The particulars flow from, and derive their meaning from, the universal. Universal is the one, which is the synthesis of the many particulars. This is elaborated (Chaudhury, et. al , 2000) in contrast to two other hegemonic principles - *complex hegemony* and *synthetic hegemony*. Complex hegemony is defined over, what has been called (ibid), an unreconstituted Gramscian field. That is Gramsci weighed down, as Althusser had pointed, out by Hegelian categories which were inappropriate to his discourse about passive revolution. This is the space over which Chatterjee builds his discourse (Chatterjee P, 1986, 1994). Here, as we have elaborated in ch 4, synthesis is not constituted through supercession of thesis by anti-thesis (by nascent capitalism superceeding feudalism, say) but anti-thesis appropriating parts of the thesis to form a *surrogate synthesis* — the nation state in postcolonial India. *Synthetic hegemony* is defined over a postmodern epistemological field where the thesis and anti-thesis are constituted together, in difference, not strictly separated with absolute values. Modernity, say, is not defined absolutely but in difference, and together with, tradition.

We do not accept the Hegelian (simple) synthesis or unreconstituted Gramscian (complex) synthesis. Correspondingly we do not accept the hegemonic principles defined over these spaces. The Hegelian concept of hegemony, based on simple synthesis, is an illusion which helps sustain hegemony, itself. For example, state based on principles of commodity exchange is touted as the universal from which labour and capital flow as particulars. We say that this, so called universal, is an illusion which has evolved through the capitalist class process to persuade acceptance of capital's order. Similarly, the concept of one unifying, caste (community) based dharma unifying all dharmas is a fetish i.e. an illusion working in the service of power. In this latter instance it is working in the service of tradition.